

**Opening Statement  
The Honorable Edward J. Markey  
Committee on Natural Resources  
Wednesday March 13, 2013**

**Oversight Hearing on Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act**

Thank you Mr. Chairman for allowing my good friend Bill Keating to introduce his constituent John Pappalardo, a very distinguished constituent.

From Cape Cod to Cape Ann, New Bedford to Newburyport, Massachusetts has long been home to some of the best fishermen and most productive fisheries in the world. Our proud fishing tradition and vibrant coastal communities are a critical part of the cultural heritage and economy of my state.

In 1976, Don Young and Gerry Studds moved the original Fisheries Conservation and Management Act through the House. Subsequent amendments of the law have sought to ensure healthy fish populations and the jobs, income and prosperity for fishing communities that come with them. Along the way the bill also picked up the name of its Senate sponsors Warren Magnuson of Washington and Ted Stevens of Alaska, short-changing the contributions of both the House and the Atlantic Ocean. The bill originated here with Gerry Studds and Don Young.

That's a shame because in the waters off of Massachusetts is one of the best examples of how rebuilding stocks and using science-based management can create a conservation and economic success story. The Atlantic sea scallop fishery landed only 2 million pounds in 1995, but cooperation among scientists, managers and the industry increased landings to 125 million pounds in 2011. This created thousands of jobs, generated billions of dollars for the Massachusetts economy, and helped make New Bedford the highest value fishing port in the United States.

Not all Massachusetts fisheries are doing as well. Last fall, the Secretary of Commerce took the unprecedented step of declaring an economic disaster for the New England groundfish fishery before the 2013 season even started. Anticipating reductions in the catch limits for the iconic cod and other key fish based on the latest stock assessment prompted Commerce to action. Fishermen that depend on this fishery now face an uncertain future, and their fears and frustrations are justified.

I'm frustrated that the majority here in the House has ignored the needs of fishermen. House leadership refused to even allow a vote on an amendment I proposed to restore \$150 million in fisheries disaster aid passed by the Senate. This hurt fishing families not only in Massachusetts and New England, but in Alaska, Mississippi, and Texas as well. House Republican leaders have also rejected calls for increased funding to improve the scientific understanding of our fisheries and oceans. Rather than helping to find real solutions to deal with climate change, many have denied its existence. Instead, they have backed budgets that undercut science, and offered alternatives to the sequester that would have cut science even more to spare the Pentagon's bloated budget.

Fishermen in Massachusetts and across the country deserve this committee's oversight of what is and isn't working for managing our nation's fisheries. They deserve improved and more frequent stocks assessments to reduce uncertainty and increase harvest quotas. They deserve federal assistance to help them weather the storm of declared economic disasters. And they deserve a better understanding of how global warming and changes in ocean chemistry are affecting the fish and the sea they depend on for their livelihoods.

Changing the Magnuson-Stevens Act cannot create more fish. Changing it cannot create additional science to inform fisheries management and build healthy stocks. Inadequate funding for science makes poor management and failing fisheries a self-fulfilling prophecy. Not funding disaster relief makes certain that fishing families will suffer.

As we begin to consider reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act today, I hope we can focus on the fact that fisheries are made up of fish *and* fishermen, and that healthy fisheries have both. I look forward to hearing about innovative solutions from our witnesses, especially John Pappalardo, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association, that will improve the health of our nation's fish stocks and the economies of the coastal communities that depend on them.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.